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SUBJECT: GHANAIAN COMMUNITY LEADERS HONE LOBBYING SKILLS

1. Summary. Post sponsored a workshop on grassroots democracy for 35 community leaders in the economically deprived area of northern Ghana from October 19-21, 2004. Representatives from government, non-governmental organizations, and the media met to discuss ways to create a grassroots constituency, approaches to use in persuading legislators to take up their cause and methods of using the media to their advantage. The workshop was enhanced by a "field trip" to a political rally for Ghanaian President John Kufuor, who was in the area campaigning for re-election, and it afforded the group an opportunity to witness firsthand the ways in which a practiced politician can work a recalcitrant crowd. End Summary.

2. From October 19-21, 2004, post sponsored a workshop in Wa, Upper West Region, for 35 community leaders from the three, predominantly-Muslim Upper West, Northern and Upper East Regions (or districts) of Ghana. Participants included members of the Wa municipal assembly, Tumu town council, non-governmental groups that benefit women and orphans, two candidates for National Parliament, and three journalists, two from the government-run Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and one from a local private FM radio station (Radio Progress). Two former IVLP participants, Catherine Amy Bob-Milliar, of the Upper West Rural Women's Association (2002) and Godfrey Bayon, Wa Municipal Chief Executive (2003), organized the workshop. Post used speaker funds to bring to Ghana Dr. Kevin Gottlieb, a former high-ranking aide to four US Senators and President of Kevin Gottlieb and Associates, Inc., a Maryland firm that specializes in training individuals and organizations on how to create grassroots constituencies.

3. Dr. Gottlieb, the workshop facilitator, is a persuasive and engaging speaker, peppering his talks with local examples, adages and other phrases to keep the attention of his audience. He told workshop participants that the most effective way to achieve their organizations' goals is to focus on one priority at a time, and to build coalitions, internally and externally. Politics is about inclusion, he said, not exclusion, and one must be vigilant against discriminating against any member of your network on the basis of gender, race, age, or sexual preference. He said an effective network or grassroots constituency is one that values the contributions of all its members, an essential quality if the group is to be successful in achieving its goals. He cited as an example the case of eight people stuck in an elevator of the World Trade Center towers during the terrorist attacks three years ago. He said not one of the high-powered, Wall Street brokers or businesspeople in the elevator knew what to do when the elevator became stuck in-between floors. He said they managed to escape because a maintenance man, who was also trapped in the elevator, improvised and used a pen-knife to cut through an elevator wall, allowing the group to escape to safety.

4. Dr. Gottlieb said politics and campaigning is the practice of promising items to a constituency but that governing is the art of how you deliver on those promises. He said effective constituencies hold their leaders accountable to promises made. One workshop participant complained that residents of the Upper West, Northern and Upper East Regions of Ghana feel marginalized by the focus given to southern regions by the central government in Accra. Dr. Gottlieb recommended that legislators in the Upper West Region reach out to colleagues in the southern Ashanti region for help in securing more resources and programs for the north in exchange for providing their support to help meet the needs of people in the south.

5. One of the unexpected pleasures for the workshop participants and facilitator was a "field trip" to a political rally by President John Kufuor, who was in Wa at the same time. President Kufuor was not officially a candidate for re-election (he filed his papers several days after the rally), but the durbar, or gathering of chiefs in the region, was clearly political, with vendors selling political buttons, banners and sun visors, printed with the President's face and the red, white and blue colors of the ruling New Patriotic Party.

6. The rally proved a valuable example for workshop participants of how a veteran politician can work a crowd, even one that is not very supportive. Wa has traditionally supported an opposition political party (the National Democratic Congress), and the audience for the President was

noticeably sparse, mostly made up of students bused to the parade grounds. Yet the President smiled, waved and walked the inside perimeter of the grounds and shaking hands with audience members in the front rows, including our workshop participants. The President even stopped for small talk and a photo with Dr. Gottlieb. Moments later, during his speech, President Kufuor told residents he was visiting Wa because he wanted see for himself the status of projects his government has arranged for the region, and he then recounted several public works his government has promoted for the region.

17. The next day, Dr. Gottlieb led a spirited discussion with workshop participants, dissecting the President's speech and appearance. Dr. Gottlieb asked the workshop participants if they thought the President realized the crowd was small and consisted almost solely of students, to which there was a resounding chorus of "yes." He also asked if they noticed that the President mentioned, but did not elaborate on, the condition of the main road into town, which has remained unpaved for years, and again, most chimed in with "yes." An assemblyman from the President's party defended Mr. Kufuor, saying he did not expand on the road issue because he probably did not want to make empty promises about its completion. This prompted groans from other class members, and one complained that most members of Parliament and other politicians are unresponsive to the needs of their constituencies once elected. Dr. Gottlieb said voters must hold their elected leaders accountable. He urged participants to use the locally-based University for Development Studies to document how the main road, once paved, would promote greater trade and tourism to the region. Dr. Gottlieb also encouraged workshop participants to use the news media as a means of pressuring politicians to fulfill campaign promises, and to press legislators to build coalitions with political leaders in other regions to push through the priorities of the northern regions.

18. Results of the three-day workshop were outstanding, with participants using the opportunity to exchange phone numbers and addresses and to begin to forge coalitions to work toward development of the northern regions. Some suggested that the workshop should be offered to higher-ranking officials so that they would benefit from the ideas on how to create a grassroots constituency and follow through on campaign promises. Some participants recommended that the workshop should be longer, with more attention paid to ethics in government, but overall, the evaluations by the workshop participants were positive with comments such as "excellent", "I can better mobilize people at the community level" as a result of attending the workshop and "I am going to share these experiences with my fellow women and men friends, and especially my husband."

19. Post appreciates the support of ECA and IIP for their assistance in arranging this important workshop, coming only weeks before Ghana's national elections December 7. It was ECA's International Visitors Leadership Program, which identified Dr. Gottlieb as a speaker for an IVLP program last year in Washington. That appearance led IVLP program participant Mr. Bayon to urge post to seek the IIP Speaker Bureau's help in arranging for Dr. Gottlieb to be the facilitator of a grassroots democracy workshop in Ghana. Post recommends hiring Dr. Gottlieb for similar workshops elsewhere. He is a high-energy, low-maintenance speaker, who connects well with people of other cultures.

YATES